

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). The Chair will entertain unanimous-consent requests for 5-minute special orders, alternating sides of the aisle, for 1 hour, without prejudice to the resumption of legislative business.

WARS ARE TEMPORARY; LANDMINES ARE NOT

(Mr. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, last month the United Nations Association in my district sponsored an essay contest for high school students on the subject of eliminating land mines.

Land mines are a piece of military weaponry designed to help end wars, but wars are temporary and most mines are not, writes first place winner Andrew Feitt, a 9th grader from Santa Barbara's Laguna Blanca School.

Second place winner Nikolaus Schiffman, a 12th grader from Santa Barbara High School also hit the nail on the head when he wrote, Canada showed such leadership when it hosted the Ottawa Conference in October 1996, and hopefully the United States will make similar gestures.

It is time to eradicate all land mines before they do the same to us, says third place winner and 9th grader, Geren Piltz from Carpenteria High School.

Tomorrow is the first anniversary of the President's announcement that he will seek an international ban on land mines, but we have seen little progress. It is time to get serious about land mines. It is time to join the Canadian process. As my three constituents made clear, we must live without land mines.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the essays to which I referred:

WARS ARE TEMPORARY, BUT MINES ARE NOT
(By Andrew Feitt, Santa Barbara, CA)

The devastating technology of land mines is one that plagues the battlefields and trouble spots of our century. They are a piece of military weaponry designed to help end wars, but wars are temporary, and most mines are not. Even when the conflict draws to a close and old enemies become friends, the mines remain, destroying the lives of simple men, women, and children who might never suspect their hidden presence. Yet what can the U.N. do to end this problem? The global community has tried before, and failed. Will anyone be able to cure the spreading plague of mine warfare?

Every fifteen minutes, it is estimated, a mine explodes and every day some seventy people die as a result. Nor are these combatants, for since the end of the Second World War ninety percent of those killed were civilians. Official government estimates put the number of mines at over 100,000,000, but

they acknowledge there could be many more lying in wait, as of yet undetected. According to Paul Davis, land mines are "... the greatest violators of international humanitarian law, practicing blind terrorism ... they never miss, strike blindly, and go on killing long after hostilities have ended." According to the Protocol II of the UN Inhumane Weapons Convention of 1980, landmines are, like chemical and biological weapons, to be strictly regulated. Many, however, wish to go further believing landmines should be banned outright, like chemical and biological weapons. Other countries, in which landmines constitute a great deal of their exports, believe they should only be regulated. Which side should the U.N. take?

The major supporters of a total ban on all mines, the Scandinavian countries, Ireland, Belgium, and New Zealand, favor an immediate end to production. They are a vocal, if small and seemingly unimportant group, especially when lined up against those from the other extreme, the major producers. China is the most visible, one of the last strongholds of Communism, ever at odds with the Capitalist West. A compromise must be reached if ever any action on landmines is to be taken.

At the 34th North American International Model United Nations Conference, held in Georgetown earlier this year, a topic raised was that of 'smart' mines. I myself had the opportunity to attend this conference, and this particular idea was well-thought and logical. 'Smart' mines, like 'smart' bombs, are weapons of war that can be programmed, i.e. in this case to deactivate themselves after a certain time period has elapsed. For example, if a conflict broke out between North and South Korea, the opposing armies could lay 'smart' mines on the demilitarized zone, activate them, then have them deactivated after nine months. Thus the effects would not be lingering. The best solution to ending the civilian casualties would be a U.N. resolution, passed by the Security Council, banning outright the production, import, and export of all forms of conventional landmines, though not 'smart' mines, and a gradual reduction of those currently in stock. Thus the only potential opponent to this, China, might grudgingly consent or abstain, not wishing to see some of its trading privileges revoked. Already the United Kingdom has declared a moratorium on conventional mine export, excluding the self-destruct or self-neutralizing 'smart' mines. The rest of the world should follow their example.

However, mere resolutions are not the only answer. Even when conventional mines are banned, many others will remain. Acting through non-governmental organizations such as the International Red Cross, the U.N. must help to provide immediate relief to the beleaguered nations. As well, U.N. affiliated organizations like the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) could also be of some assistance. Those countries most ravaged by landmines most often are those with recent, now resolved, conflicts, and often have U.N. observer forces there, whose duties could be expanded to landmine location and destruction.

Thirdly, in order to better address this issue in the world community, an ad hoc body of military and industrial analysts should be established whose sole duty would be to constantly review landmine removal efforts around the world at pinpoint potential trouble spots where large civilian populations are located near dormant minefields. This tribunal could also be entrusted with reviewing the efforts of member nations to end landmine production, and, if a nation fails to comply, suggest some form of economic retribution to the Security Council.

Of course, there is always the ever-present question. Who will pay for all this? Certainly the United Nations, already deep in debt, could not afford to fund all these efforts. There are many nations, such as the United States, that may begin paying back its debt when it sees the U.N. is moving in a productive direction. As well, there are numerous private companies, possibly seeking to invest in such countries as Vietnam, that may fund landmine removal if the minefield occupies the terrain they wish to build on. In 1993, it was a British mine-producing company that sought the U.N.'s permission for landmine removal. Once the U.N. begins this endeavor, there will be little shortage of donations for a noble cause.

In conclusion, while landmines remain an ever-present threat to peace and global security, the campaign against them grows stronger every year.

A CALL TO DISARM

(By Nikolaus Matthias Schiffman, Santa Barbara, CA)

Recently, much international attention has focused upon the possibility of the instillation of a worldwide ban on the production and utilization of antipersonnel mines. Not too long ago, the general consensus of the people of the world was that landmines were a horrific yet necessary part of military warfare; however—partly due to the recent developments in Somalia—people's general awareness of the devastation and hardship caused by landmines has greatly increased, and, thanks to the efforts of the United Nations and many other non-governmental organizations, the prospect of the complete elimination of landmines no longer seems like a utopian ideal, but instead, a realistic goal to work towards for the year 2000 (a). As an economic and military superpower, it is imperative that the United States assumes a leading role in the United Nations' continuing efforts to establish a ban on antipersonnel landmines.

It is estimated that every year, there are more than 25,000 incidents of people being killed or maimed by landmines, and in most of these cases, the victims are innocent civilians who are living in countries without sufficient medical facilities to deal with the injuries (b). Because of the sheer scope and frequency of these incidents, the United Nations are usually unable to be of direct assistance to the victims. Instead, many non-governmental organizations, such as the International Red Cross, play a key role in helping the victims of landmines. To this extent, many lives and limbs have been saved because a landmine victim was able to get medical help in time (c).

Working with other governments, the United Nations has helped to educate civilians about the dangers of landmines. For example, in January of 1996, the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs teamed up with the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina to set up the Mine Action Programme. Plans like the Mine Action Programme devote time and money to educating and increasing people's awareness of landmines, to gathering information and data about the possible locations of landmines, to mechanically removing landmines, and to training specialists who can remove the mines (d). Without programs such as these, the situation with landmines would be much worse than it is today. The United Nations has provided great assistance to countries like Cambodia that lack the technology to properly deal with the problem (e). However, these efforts are not enough. Something else must be done.

Every day, more landmines are planted in the earth than are removed (f). As long as